

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /082 W  
-----082566 120358Z /61  
R 102250Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7882  
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 2324

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, EC  
SUBJECT: SIXTO DURAN BALLEEN'S CAMPAIGN MALAISE

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL FRONT-RUNNER SIXTO DURAN-BALLEEN'S CAMPAIGN IS RUNNING INTO TROUBLE AS HIS PERSONAL ELECTIONEERING TECHNIQUES SHOW DEFICIENCIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CAMPAIGN OF SIXTO DURAN-BALLEEN, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONALIST FRONT (FNC) WHO IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS THE CURRENT FRONT-RUNNER, IS HAVING TROUBLE DEVELOPING MOMENTUM. ALTHOUGH MANY PROBLEMS SEEM TO BE ORGANIZATIONAL, DURAN-BALLEEN IS PROVING HIMSELF TO BE A LACKLUSTER POLITICAL SHOWMAN AND AN AMATEUR IN THE ROUGH AND TUMBLE OF NATIONAL POLITICS.

3. PERHAPS MOST FRUSTRATING TO THE OLD PROS IN THE FNC WAS DURAN-BALLEEN'S DEPARTURE ON APRIL 7 FOR A ONE WEEK VISIT TO THE US, ISRAEL AND SPAIN. TO HIS OPOONENTS HIS ABSENCE DURING THE CAMPAIGN MAY LOOK LIKE ARROGANCE BUT TO HIS BACKERS IT REFLECTS SOME OF THE FRUSTRATIONS THEY HAVE BEEN FACING SINCE THE CAMPAIGN'S BEGINNING. GUAYAQUIL'S EL TELEGRAFO, WHICH HAS ENDORSED HIM, TOOK THE CANDIDATE TO TASK FOR THE SERIOUS MISTAKE OF TRAVELLING TO ADDRESS ECUADOREANS  
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IN THE US (WHO CANNOT VOTE) AND AN ARCHITECT'S CONFERENCE IN ISRAEL DURING A CAMPAIGN, FOR AMATEURISM, AND FOR A "DON'T GIVE A DAMN ATTITUDE."

4. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT THE PRESENT TRIP WILL COST HIM, HIS ABSENCE REFLECTS AN ATTITUDE THAT MAY LIMIT HIS PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITIES. UPON DEPARTURE

FOR THE US HIS CAMPAIGN MANAGER INDICATED THAT THERE WERE NO PLANS FOR CAMPAIGN TOURS UPON HIS RETURN AND THAT DURAN WOULD CONCENTRATE HIS EFFORTS ON TELEVISION.

5. ALTHOUGH THE FNC LIKELY ENJOYS MORE GENEROUS CAMPAIGN FINANCING THAN OTHER GROUPS, AND THUS IS IN A BETTER POSITION THAN OTHERS TO UTILIZE MORE COSTLY CAMPAIGN APPROACHES, IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT TELEVISION IS DURAN-BALLEN'S METIER. DURAN-BALLEN APPEARED FOR A HALF HOUR ON PRIME TIME TWO WEEKS AGO AND HIS AWKWARD ATTEMPT AT US-STYLE INFORMALITY ("HI, I'M SIXTO DURAN AND I'M RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT") PLUS HIS HALTING ABILITY TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS, PROBABLY LOST HIM MORE VOTES THAN WERE GAINED. AGAIN, EL TELEGRAFO COMPLAINED IN ITS LEADING EDITORIAL ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING THAT THIS WAS NOT THE SIXTO THAT THEY KNEW.

6. DURAN-BALLEN FARED ONLY A LITTLE BETTER IN AN APRIL 5 APPEARANCE AT A CYCLE ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLATFORMS OF THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES BEING PRESENTED IN QUITO BY AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION. HE MADE THE MISTAKE OF ATTEMPTING TO DEFEND HIMSELF AT SOME LENGTH FROM SOME MILD CRITICISM THAT LIBERAL CANDIDATE FRANCISCO HUERTA HAD AIMED AT HIM IN THE SAME FORUM A FEW DAYS BEFORE AS IF HUERTA, NOT HE, WERE THE FRONT-RUNNER. THEN, WHILE PROVING HIMSELF AT EASE WITH PROBLEMS DEALING WITH ROAD-BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL

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FINANCING, HE DISPLAYED A DISMAYING LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, AND SOMETIMES INTEREST IN OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS. FOR INSTANCE, ASKED ABOUT THE OCTOBER AZTRA SUGAR MILL LABOR INCIDENT WHEN AT LEAST 25 WORKERS DIED, HE REPLIED THAT HE HAD BEEN MAYOR OF QUITO AT THE TIME, HAD BEEN BUSY WITH OTHER THINGS AND HAD NO OPINION ON THE PROBLEM.

7. COMMENT: DURAN-BALLEN COMMENCED THE CAMPAIGN WITH A ROCK-HARD CATHOLIC CONSERVATIVE CONSTITUTENCY IN THE SIERRA, IMPRESSIVE CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION IN GUAYAQUIL, AND A HANDSOME REPUTATION AS MAYOR OF QUITO. HOWEVER, HE IS PROVING TO BE SOMETHING OF A BUST IN STAND-UP FORMATS, WHETHER ON THE HUSTINGS, ON TELEVISION, OR ON A PODIUM. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW SIGNIFICANT THESE DEFICIENCIES WILL PROVE TO BE, OR WHETHER HE WILL RECOGNIZE THEM BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS. BUT AT THIS POINT, DESPITE HIS ASSETS, HE IS BEGINNING TO APPEAR EMINENTLY VINCIBLE.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION CANDIDATES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 10 apr 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014